



Pari Beigi <pbeigi@hotmail.com> on 04/08/2004 08:13:55 PM

To: politicalcommitteestatus@fec.gov
cc:

Subject: Proposed Rule

Ms. Mai T. Dinh
Acting Assistant General Counsel
Federal Election Commission
999 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20463

Re: Federal Election Commission ("FEC"); 11 CFR Parts 100, 102, 104, 106 and 114; Political Committee Status; Proposed Rule.

Dear Ms. Dinh:

As a concerned citizen and member of several different nonprofit organizations, I take great exception to the above-referenced Proposed Rule to modify the current definition of what constitutes a "political committee" and further question the timing of this regulatory proposal. The Proposed Rule is overly broad, will chill public debate and free speech and, quite simply, exceeds the FEC's authority.

I am especially concerned that in promulgation of the Proposed Rule, legitimate educational activities of nonprofit organizations (such as those nonpartisan activities by environmental, religious and voter registration groups) will be interpreted to be political activities, inappropriately converting those groups into "political committees." This would result in restrictions on donations to and from these groups, inordinate and burdensome regulatory registration, organization and recordkeeping requirements, and thereby restricting the work that these groups can do for the public good.

Furthermore, the chilling effect of the proposed rules on free speech cannot be overstated. Merely expressing an opinion about an officeholder's policies could turn a nonprofit group overnight into a federally regulated political committee with crippling fund-raising restrictions. The Proposed Rule would act as a defacto gag rule, insulating public officials from criticism and diminish citizen participation in government. Nothing in the McCain-Feingold campaign reform law or in the Supreme Court's decision in *McConnell v. FEC*, 124 S.Ct. 619 (2003), provides any basis for the Proposed Rule. In fact, so far as tax exempt organizations go, there are already existing adequate laws and rules restricting their political activities.

Finally, the fact that the Proposed Rule is being promulgated during an election year in which the political landscape is extremely polarized, is particularly troubling. It is during these historic times in a nation's history when public discord and the freedoms afforded to all of us, in particular the Constitutional rights to freedom of speech and association, are most critical. To enact any rule that jeopardizes, restricts or chills those rights is simply unacceptable.

In light of the above, I'd ask that you abandon the Proposed Rule to modify the definition of "political committee."

Sincerely,

Pari Beigi
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